

White Manhood Suffrage

Throughout the first half of the 19th century, “free suffrage” was the goal of men who believed that they did not need to own property to have an interest in the fortunes of their country or to exercise sound judgment on its behalf. They agitated to change state constitutions and abolish property requirements for voting. This cane bearing their slogan was likely carried in parades. Some men in power shared their philosophy. Others found the growing power of the “common man,” the shifting American economy, and the need for new voters to support their own new political parties were compelling reasons to support free suffrage.



Free suffrage cane, 1830s

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Land grant to Nicholas Hilton

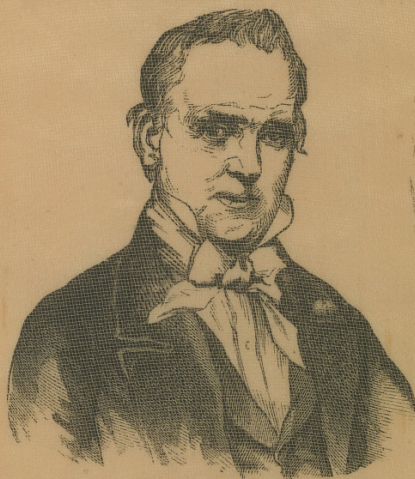
Owning property of a certain size or value was the earliest qualification for voters in the new United States. In some states women and free African Americans were among those voters.

Gift of N. L. Griswold

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Nearly all white men could vote for president in the 1856 election. Free African American men could only vote in six northern states and women could not vote at all.

FOR PRESIDENT
JAMES BUCHANAN.



FOR VICE-PRESIDENT
JOHN C. BRECKINRIDGE.

We Po'ked 'em in '44,
We Pierced 'em in '52,
And we'll "Buck 'em" in '56.

JOHNSON, PR., 5 N. TENTH ST.

Buchanan campaign ribbon, 1856

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Fremont campaign ribbon, 1856

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FOR PRESIDENT
MILLARD FILLMORE.



MILLARD FILLMORE.

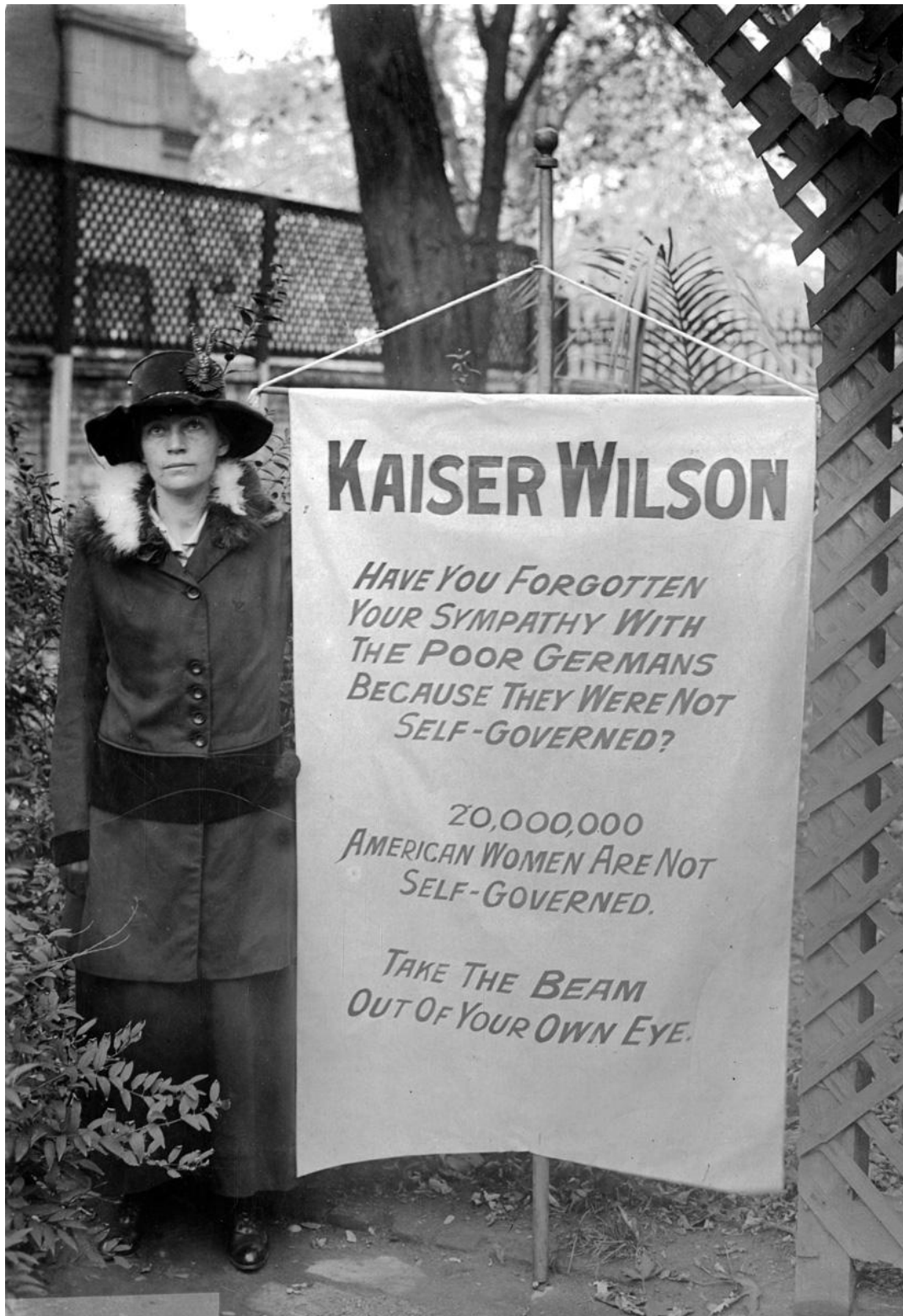
FOR VICE-PRESIDENT
ANDREW J. DONELSON.

"If there be those either North or South, who desire an administration for the North as against the South, or for the South as against the North, they are not the men who should give their suffrages to me. For my own part, I know only my country, my whole country, and nothing but my country."—MILLARD FILLMORE.

JOHNSON, PR., 5 N. TENTH ST.

American Democracy?

World Wars I and II focused American attention on the gap between the nation's assertions of democracy and the discrimination faced by women, African Americans, and other minorities. Voting rights became civil rights.



Woman suffrage picket, 1917

In 1917 suffragists compared President Woodrow Wilson to the German Kaiser and point out the hypocrisy of his pro-democracy rhetoric when American women could not vote.

Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

Hours & Admission

Open every day, except December 25, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Admission is free and no tickets are required.

Location & Contact

1300 Constitution Ave NW,

Washington, DC 20560 <<https://www.google.com/maps/place/smithsonian+national+museum+of+american+history/@38.8912835,-77.0322449,17z>>

Contact Information </about/contact>

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